



**10<sup>th</sup> International Conference**  
**Peace and Prosperity in Muslim Majority Countries & Beyond**

5<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**Speech by HE Foreign Minister Dr. Zambry Abd Kadir**

1. I would like to congratulate the board and management of Islam & Liberty Network (L) Foundation for organizing its 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on “Peace and Prosperity in Muslim Majority Countries & Beyond”. I welcome all international delegates to Malaysia and I hope you all enjoy your stay here and get a chance to see beautiful Kuala Lumpur and other cities.
2. As a Malaysian, I feel honoured that your organization has chosen Malaysia as a venue of its 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference.
3. As a developing nation, Malaysia has a unique history. As a South-Eastern Nation, Malaysia was historically a peaceful place which offered a hub for regional trade. After its independence, Malaysia has emerged as a pluralist, progressive and prosperous country. A unique feature of our history is that we are the only country in OIC member countries, providing a foundation of political stability by continuous elections. While our governments are not perfect, we do believe in, and practice, the representative democracy.
4. When challenged with violent riots of 1969, Malaysian nation adopted *Rukun Negara* (or National Principles) as a method to foster national unity, with the purpose of creating harmony among various races in the country. The main ambitions of Rukun Negara are: unity, democratic way of life, just and equitable society, liberal approach to our diverse heritage, and progressive and modern society. Its principles are: belief in God, loyalty to king and country, supremacy of the constitution, rule of law, courtesy and morality.
5. Fast forward to today, it will not be out of place to mention “Malaysia Madani” which is a national policy framework and government slogan introduced by YAB Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia. MADANI is the Malay acronym for SCRIPT, which stands for sustainability, care and compassion, respect, innovation, prosperity, and trust.

6. Economic development should lead to poverty alleviation of masses. Malaysia has come a long way in eradicating poverty. In 1970s, our poverty rate was 50%, and now it is less than 5%. We are on our way to be included in the high income and developed country.
7. Malaysia is also home to a religiously and culturally diverse population, where Muslims, Christians, Hindus and other members of the faith community live in harmony. Once again, we have our share of challenges, but we have negotiated these differences in a non-violent manner through dialogue and democratic means.
8. Peace and Prosperity in the Muslim World as the theme of your 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference is a timely and relevant topic for a number of reasons:
9. Firstly, we are witnessing normalization of relations among key Middle East countries. It holds great prospects for the region and beyond. These offer great opportunities to the Muslim Ummah for cooperation which we should deliberate on to transform them into better tomorrow for the world.
10. Secondly, the fact that the recent development in geopolitics in the Middle East also signals important shift in the regional and global power dynamics. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world thought we are reaching the "*The End of History*" (as argued by Francis Fukuyama) and emergence of a unipolar world was envisioned. That was a premature conclusion. Today, the world is again becoming a multi-polar, whereas Fukuyama is now talking about "*Liberalism and its Discontents*" as in his book published some years ago.
11. Thirdly, also on a related note, the rise of populism in various parts of the world has pushed political debate into extreme positions, where hyper nationalism has come to dominate the discourse and challenge liberal politics. Populism not only threatens foundations of a liberal democracy, but it also erodes foundations of economic stability. Populist policies are threat to long term prosperity.
12. I would like to reiterate that Malaysia continues to pursue an independent, principled, and pragmatic foreign policy, founded on the values of peace, humanity, justice, and equality. The overarching thrust of its foreign policy has been to safeguard Malaysia's sovereignty and national interests as well as to contribute meaningfully towards a just and equitable community of nations through the conduct of effective diplomacy.
13. Furthermore, as a country with a large Muslim majority, Malaysia also gives importance to the solidarity of the Ummah and the spirit of cooperation among the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
14. As a Malaysia's foreign minister, I reiterate our support for a lasting and peaceful solution to end Palestinian-Israeli conflict consistent with the United Nations resolutions and I believe that this will contribute towards greater and sustainable peace.

15. In the spirit of our policy and on-going developments, I believe that we should strive for a world which is based on universal values. I am glad to note that Islam & Liberty Network also espouses universal values of freedom while being rooted in the Islamic faith: They are: Religious Freedom (freedom of religion and faith, expression and practice); Economic Freedom (open markets, voluntary exchange, and limited government); and Political Freedom (liberal democracy and rule of law).
16. I am sure you will agree that one of the challenges is to understand and explain meaning and context of liberty and freedom especially in a Muslim majority society. It does not mean freedom to do everything, as is commonly misunderstood, but rather it is freedom from coercion and freedom from violence.
17. For Malaysians, the heart of liberty is inclusion, where we respect and include all traditions and cultures. Liberty also brings responsibility which should be transformed into a caring and passionate society.
18. I am confident that the knowledge which this conference will generate should not remain confined to these walls, but it should travel and touch our societies and speak in a language which they can understand. As public intellectuals, it is our responsibility to educate the public at large about these issues. Use of modern technology to reach out public is now critical to create impact of any programme.
19. I would like to recognize many excellent and distinguished scholars and academics who have come to present their work and share their thoughts here. As scholars and researchers, I hope that you will deliberate on the important challenges and problems that we face today. The spirit of Islam demands a fair society which is based on trust, cooperation, and progress offering opportunities to all without any discrimination. I look forward to key deliverables coming out from this conference and express my commitment to take them forward to appropriate forums.
20. Finally, I wish this conference a great success.